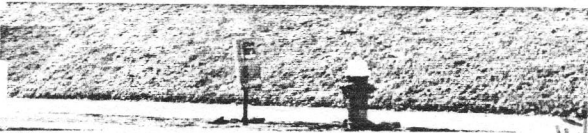


FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.	Form no.
A	5



1. Town Lexington

Address 1580 Mass. Ave.

First Baptist Church

ent use \_\_\_\_\_

ent owner \_\_\_\_\_

ription: \_\_\_\_\_

1893

urce Hudson II, 1913 p. xviii

Shingle Style

itect J. Williams Beal / C. Harry Erickson (1958)  
rior wall fabric Shingle, fieldstone alt

Outbuildings (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Other features A superior building ; complex facade; center entrance set back behind

granite framed arch; round projecting  
(over)

Altered Additions Date 1927, 1958

Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

5. Lot size:

One acre or less \_\_\_\_\_ Over one acre \_\_\_\_\_ x

Approximate frontage 200'

Approximate distance of building from street

30'

6. Recorded by E. W. Reinhardt

Organization Lexington Historical Commission

Date 10/14/75



DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE  
USGS Quadrant \_\_\_\_\_

MHC Photo no. \_\_\_\_\_

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

Original use \_\_\_\_\_

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates \_\_\_\_\_

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	_____	Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ invention	_____
The Arts	_____	Industry	_____	Social/ humanitarian	_____
Commerce	_____	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
Communication	_____	Political	_____		
Community development	_____				

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

Descrip cont; bay to left of entrance, 3 windows divided by columns with carved detail on upper half, dentil course at cornice, conical roof; smaller circular projecting bay to right of entrance, one diamond paned window framed in granite, 1st level; two windows at 2nd level in bay, conical roof; square tower with protruding round corners rises behind right hand bay ; Four conical caps on corners of tower, roof of tower rises from four sides, meet at point with ornamental iron cross. Walls at first level of two bays & entrance = fieldstone, right bays & tower shingled above. Secondary entrances to right & left of main center element. Shingled walls, right door with projecting shingled gable over. Tall dormer window shingled on to left of left bay & to right of tower.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

*See: Church History, pub. 1984; Author: Anne MacDougall.*

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town  
LEXINGTON

Property Address  
1580 MASS. AVE.

Area(s) Form No.

A	5
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## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The current church replaces an earlier Baptist structure constructed on the same site in 1834, remodeled and enlarged during the 1880s and destroyed by fire on May 13, 1891. On March 11, 1892 the building committee voted to build a new church on the same site "after the plan of one just completed in Randolph" (MacDougall 1983: 37). By September 1892 the foundation neared completion and the contractor, U.S. Holmes, was paid \$650 and the architect, J. Williams Beal, was paid \$300. On October 21, 1892, the cornerstone was laid with a time capsule placed underneath (see *Lexington Minute-man*, October 28, 1892 for a list of the contents of the time capsule). The total cost of the building was approximately \$12,000. The dedication of the new church took place on June 29, 1893 and the newspaper that day offers a very detailed description of the building:

It is Elizabethan (?) in its style of architecture, a charming effect being gained by the generous use of field stone in its construction, the foundation walls, chimney and base of the towers being of this material. The superstructure is of cherry stained shingles. The exterior is distinguished by a high, square bell tower, intersected in the centre of the low gable which forms the main structure. Jutting out from this is a circular tower which runs half way up, and still another large tower effect is obtained by the springing out in a deep semi circular form of the lower end of the building, which gives an opportunity for a series of clustered windows. An arched entrance of the field stone, pointed dormer windows, and leaded cathedral glass are striking features of the church. Entering the main entrance you are ushered into a spacious corridor running the length of the building. From this are entered the main audience room, the Sunday school room and the ladies' parlor, all prettily finished in cypress, with walls of a pleasant tone of terra-cotta. All these rooms can be practically thrown into one and each is of excellent proportions. The parlor is in the large tower, and the circular form affords excellent lighting facilities. A large open fire-place, faced with pressed brick and a neat mantle, is a feature of the room. The audience room was referred to last week. The cypress, which is the wood finish, is very pleasing in its effect, showing off finely against the vaulted intruncated ceiling of gray plaster and in the wainscoting which encases the circular chancel as far as the springing of ceiling. The audience room has a wainscoting and supporting rafters and the seats have high sides, all in keeping with the attractive style of the church, the distinctive tone of which is a pinkish terra-cotta and the pale golden tint of the cypress. The furniture of the church is simple but handsome in its design, consisting of an octagonal pulpit, placed on the left side of the raised platform, reading desk, large communion table and a chair. The paneling and grill work in these furnishings are very pleasing in their style of construction. The organ is to the right of the platform and has a small room leading out from the choir seats, which affords a private entrance for the singers. To the left of the chancel are the retiring rooms. The furnace rooms, toilette, kitchen, pantry and dining rooms are in the basement. Electricity is used to light the structure, fixtures being of brass.

The building was designed by Boston architect John Williams Beal (1855-1919). J. Williams Beal was born in South Scituate, Mass. and studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He worked as a draftsman in the New York offices of Richard Morris Hunt and later, McKim, Mead, and White before taking several years off to travel and study in Europe. In 1888 he opened an architectural office in Boston in practice with his two sons, Horatio and John Woodbridge Beal. The MACRIS database maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission lists 127 buildings designed by the firm (some postdating the elder Beal's death in 1919). Beal's most important works include the Plymouth County Hospital and Jail, the Executive Building and Club House for the Walk-Over Shoe Company in Brockton and numerous residences. Other churches in varying styles include the Acushnet Methodist Episcopal Church (1905), All Souls Unitarian Church in Greenfield (1894), Central Methodist Episcopal Church in Brockton (1900), Charles Street African Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston (1888), Haverhill Universalist Church (1893), Melrose First United Methodist Church (1904), the Norwood First Universalist Church (1885).

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town  
LEXINGTON

Property Address  
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## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (continued):

In 1927 an addition was constructed by the Custance Brothers consisting of the Russell H. Conwell Hall, a kitchen and classrooms. It was dedicated on November 16, 1927. On July 13, 1958 the First Baptist Church broke ground for a new chapel and educational wing designed by C. Harry Erickson.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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*Lexington Minute-man*, October 28, 1892; June 29, 1893.  
MacDougall, Anne Doris. *This Way We Came: A History of the First Baptist Church, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1833-1983*. Printed November 1983.  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, MACRIS database.  
Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970.

Supplement prepared by:  
Lisa Mausolf  
March 2009



Source: Lexington Historical Society  
(see <http://www.fbclexington.org>)